Newfoundland Labrador budget 08
Securing a Sustainable Future

Education
April 29, 2008

Investments in Education Promote a Strong, Secure Future for Province's Youth

Investments in the province's K-12 and post-secondary education system in Budget 2008 will help the students of Newfoundland and Labrador take full advantage of the sustained economic and social growth of the province and secure a promising future.

"The education system will see substantial increases in funding again this year as we continue to focus on improving our school infrastructure and increasing the quality, affordability and accessibility of education in both the K-12 and post-secondary systems," said the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education. "Investments are being made in key areas to address the needs of our students and to ensure we are giving our young people every opportunity for success."

K-12 Education System

Additional funding has been allocated in Budget 2008 for school infrastructure in the K-12 system. This year, the budget for new school construction and repairs and maintenance is $88.8 million, an increase of $39.5 million over last year. In addition, $28.7 million has been allocated for programming initiatives, to increase funding to school districts and teaching services, as well as to support the implementation of the new teacher allocation model and ISSP and Pathways Commission Report.

"The past two years have been a period of review and renewal in our K-12 system as we have undertaken significant work to identify and address systemic challenges," said Minister Burke. "I was pleased to recently release the report on teacher allocations which will see a significant investment this year to increase teaching resources in support of the new allocation model and to continue our progressive action to reduce class sizes. Another key example of the fundamental changes sweeping the K-12 system is the review of student support services with funding allocated in Budget 2008 to help implement the recommendations of the ISSP and Pathways Commission report. These investments are resulting in an improved educational experience for our students, teachers and parents."

Key investments in the K-12 system include:

- $3.56 million to increase teaching resources in support of the new teacher allocation model and to reduce class sizes this year for Kindergarten and Grades 4 and 7;
- $2.4 million to support the implementation of recommendations of the ISSP and Pathways Commission Report;
- $1.6 million to accommodate distance education students, hire teaching staff for distance learning and provide overall support to school districts to assist with the delivery of distance education;
- $1 million to increase the number of hours for school secretaries;
- $500,000 to school districts for substitute teachers to enhance teacher professional development;

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- $500,000 to assist individual schools with the implementation of the School Food Guidelines; and,
- $550,000 to implement the Newfoundland and Labrador High School Social Studies course.

Minister Burke noted that Budget 2008 allocates funding for nine new schools currently under development in L'Anse au Loup, Port Saunders, Baie Verte, Torbay, Placentia, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Port Hope Simpson and two facilities in Paradise. "This is a tremendous amount of new construction activity in our province," said Minister Burke. "I am pleased that we are allocating the necessary funding to ensure these new schools are completed as state-of-the-art facilities in keeping with the standards followed by our counterparts in other jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada."

In addition, the Provincial Government will continue to place strong emphasis on the maintenance and repairs of existing schools with an increase of $5.7 million over last year to the repair and maintenance budget. This funding will help ensure an ongoing and consistent approach to the maintenance and repair of school buildings and that any problems are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

Minister Burke also announced an additional $232,000 to further support public libraries and to enhance electronic library resources.

Post-secondary Education System

An additional $27.2 million will be allocated in Budget 2008 to the public post-secondary system. This investment includes funding for infrastructure, a freeze on tuition rates, White Paper initiatives, expanded programming, adult learning and literacy and the development of the skilled labour market.

"As a government, we have remained steadfast in our efforts to increase support to our post-secondary institutions and to ensure post-secondary education is an attainable goal for all citizens," said Minister Burke. "Our investments this year clearly demonstrate the Provincial Government's continued, unprecedented commitment to quality programming, accessibility and affordability. The initiatives reflect the needs of current and potential students and are focused on making sure our post-secondary institutions are responsive to the needs of industry and the labour market."

Key investments in the post-secondary system include:

- $5 million to maintain a freeze on tuition rates at Memorial University, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and College of the North Atlantic;
- $500,000 to begin the implementation of a new governance structure for increased autonomy at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College;
- $300,000 to help Memorial University implement mass communications systems in the event of a crisis situation;
- $282,500 to improve service to students under the Student Aid Program;
- $60,000 to establish an Aboriginal Literacy Development consultant in Labrador; and,
- $60,000 to further support the operations of the T.I. Murphy Centre.

Minister Burke noted that the commitment of $5 million this year to continue the freeze on tuition rates will benefit almost 25,000 students. This initiative is a critical element to ensure university and college is a real option for as many people as possible. Combined with the reduction in interest rates and the up-front, needs-based grants established last year, Newfoundland and Labrador is a leader in having the most affordable and accessible post-secondary system in the country.

As reflected in other Budget 2008 announcements, significant emphasis has again been placed on not only making the post-secondary system affordable, but ensuring it is meeting the needs of the province. With an investment of $2.236 million, some of Memorial University's professional schools, such as Nursing, Social Work, Engineering and Business will be expanded to meet the growing demand for human resources in these areas.

In addition, the implementation of the Skills Task Force Action Plan will continue through an investment of $2.045 million to continue the Shop Modernization program at College of the North Atlantic, to upgrade high school fabrication suites for the Futures in Skilled Trades and Technology program, to begin distance delivery of apprenticeship programming, and to hire more apprentices within government departments, boards and agencies.

Key infrastructure requirements of the post-secondary system are also being addressed in Budget 2008 with a $750,000 investment for continued work on the Labrador West campus of College of the North Atlantic, $17.8 million for residences at both Memorial University in St. John's and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook and $6.8 million for a new academic building at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College.

"The people of Newfoundland and Labrador can be assured that as a government, we continue to view education as having a critical role in both individual achievement and our overall success as a province," said Minister Burke. "The funding we are allocating to our K-12 and post-secondary education systems for the coming year will help our students in their efforts to secure meaningful employment through an education and training system that will be sustained for future generations."

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